Interview with Richard Bloomfield

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR RICHARD BLOOMFIELD

Interviewed by: Richard Nethercut

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This interview is being conducted with Ambassador Richard Bloomfield on May 6th, 1988 at his home in Boston. The interview is one in a series being conducted under the auspices of The Association for Diplomatic Studies. The interviewer is Richard Nethercut, a retired Foreign Service Officer. The purpose of the interview is to provide background information on Ambassador Bloomfield's career in the Foreign Service.

Q: Ambassador Bloomfield, we very much appreciate your taking part in this interview series. Let's get started by finding out how did you get involved in a foreign affairs career in the Foreign Service?

BLOOMFIELD: Well, Dick, I got back from the military service in 1946 and without too much idea of what I wanted to do in life, except I knew I had to go to college, and within just a few weeks of being discharged I went over to Georgetown University where I'd been accepted. Not in the Foreign Service School, by the way, but in the College of Arts and Sciences. So I spent my freshman year there and while I was getting some heavy doses of Jesuit theology and logic and all those good things, it did occur to me that I was much more interested in a more career-oriented education. And I became aware that there was something called a Foreign Service School on the campus, and I had had an interest,

even in high school, in international affairs; and so I entered the Foreign Service School in my sophomore year, and graduated in 1950. I took the Foreign Service exam between my junior and senior year, and passed the written. But my entry into the Foreign Service was delayed by about a year because the Korean War broke out just a few weeks after I graduated from Georgetown, in June of 1950. I was back in the military service again within a few short weeks; and I spent just a year in the service and was discharged in '51, and took my oral exam. I entered a class that started in, I think, April of '52. So that's how I got in the business, and then I spent the next 30 years in the Foreign Service.

Q: In that 30 year career you developed certain specialties in orientation, I judge, in the economic field and in Latin America. Can you tell me how that came about?

BLOOMFIELD: I had taken a course in high school in Latin American history and also my foreign language in high school was Spanish. In those days you had to take a foreign language in high school. I gather that these days it's unfortunately optional. So I already had some interest in the Latin American area. When I came into the service and was in the Junior Officers class, the only other colleague that was also interested in Latin America was Lyle Lane. He had been working as an intern in ARA (Bureau of Inter-American Affairs) before he actually entered the service, and he said, “I know somebody over in ARA by the name of Tap Bennett” (W. Tapley Bennett, who of course, later was our Ambassador in the DR (Dominican Republic) and to NATO and to the UN, and so forth). Anyway, at that point Tap was Director of the Office of South American Affairs, and so Lyle and I went over there and told him that we'd like to get a post in Latin America. So Lyle ended up in Guayaquil, and I ended up in La Paz at our first posts. So that launched me in the Latin American area, and I stayed in it pretty much thereafter.

On the economic side, I had had some economics in college—but it certainly wasn't a major subject—and took some correspondence courses when I was in La Paz. And then at my third post in the Foreign Service, which was Monterrey, Mexico, where I was a Protection and Welfare Officer— hating every minute of it by the way—one day out of the

blue I got a letter from Personnel saying that the Department had decided that it needed to train officers in certain specialties, among which was economics; and looking at my record they had decided that I might be a likely candidate for such specialization. Would I be interested? Well, I could hardly restrain myself. I immediately wrote back and said I would very much be interested in specializing in economics; and, “Oh, by the way,” it seemed to me that if they wanted to do that, they ought to send me as soon as possible to a university where I could take graduate work in economics hoping that they'd get me out of there before my tour of duty was up, and they did. I only spent about a year and a half in Monterrey, and they sent me up to Harvard to what is now the JFK school, but which in those days was the Littauer School of Public Administration. I took a year of economics and then spent the better part of the next ten years doing economic work in Latin America or in the Department.

Q: Were there some subsequent assignments that particularly stamped your career, that you felt contributed to the development of your career following this training?

BLOOMFIELD: Yes. I was fortunate in that my very first assignment, after the year of economics at Harvard, was as Financial Officer in Montevideo, a very small embassy. I guess there were three of us in the economic section at the time—maybe four—so I was responsible for all the macro-economic reporting, you know, which included balance of payments, and internal financial reporting, and the government budget, and that sort of thing. My boss was George Landau, who is now the president of The Americas Society in New York; and my other colleague was Sam Hart who was doing the commodity reporting, because Uruguay is a big commodity country—who later, incidentally, succeeded me in Ecuador. Anyway, that assignment, which was a two-year assignment, meant that I had a broad scope, even though I was a fairly junior officer, and I could pick and choose the topics to report on within the usual Department reporting program. That assignment came just on the eve of the Alliance for Progress which emphasized economic development. And that meant that I got noticed by some people in the Department who later on had senior positions in the Alliance for Progress; at a time during the Johnson Administration

when there was a reorientation of the Alliance to macro-economic objectives. There was a group of people who were brought together to steer this new policy, and I was fortunate in being picked to be one of that group. That really helped my career tremendously, both in terms of learning and doing, and also in terms of promotions and assignments.

Q: Was that steering of the Alliance for Progress done back in Washington?

BLOOMFIELD: Yes, that was after the Uruguayan assignment. I came back from Uruguay in '62, and was assigned to be the assistant Mexican desk officer and my brief included economic matters. And Bob Sayre was my boss. So then Kennedy was assassinated within a year, and then when Johnson became president there was a real change in course because in the Kennedy years the Alliance emphasized institutional building, and social programs and reform of certain government structures, but there wasn't too much attention paid to the overall macro-economic problems, like balance of payments, savings and investment, and continuing inflation. After a couple of years it became evident that if the macro-economic side of things wasn't attended to, you could pour a lot of money into institution-building and projects and it would just go down the drain. It wouldn't really solve the underlying problem. So there was a shakeup: Ted Moscoso, who had been a Kennedy appointee and was the first Director of the Alliance, left; and Tom Mann came back from Mexico where he'd been ambassador. He was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America, and he was also appointed Director of the Latin American part of AID. So he had two hats.

After that the two bureaus, the AID bureau for Latin America, and the State bureau were merged, were actually fused. And we had some office directors who were AID career people, and vice versa. At any rate, with Mann's arrival, or shortly thereafter, there was an emphasis on program lending which was aimed at getting at fundamental parameters like balance of payments, monetary and fiscal policy. And in those days there weren't very many people in the Department that had had much experience in that sort of thing. There was a great shortage of people with economic training. So the few of us that had

had the training, and the experience, were in demand and there was a fellow by the name of Don Palmer, who was not a Latin Americanist, (Bureau of European Affairs) but he was a great economist. Anyway, he was brought in to head up this new unit that would actually administer these very large program loans, and administer them on the basis of setting performance criteria. It was very much the kind of thing that the IMF (International Monetary Fund) did, and still does, except that it was being orchestrated by the US Government.

So he set up an office in ARA, and then there was a group of us: Don was the boss, a fellow by the name of Joe Silberstein was his deputy, Bill Stedman, who later became Ambassador to Bolivia, and myself, and several others. We worked closely with the AID missions in the Latin American countries. Certain key countries were picked out for political reasons, like Brazil, like Chile. The loans in those days were for a lot of money, although today it would be chicken feed. The program in Brazil was $150 million a year. And in Chile, $80 million a year, and some smaller programs in other countries. Our job was to try to design the requirements. In other words, we'd give them this big chunk of money, which they could use for imports and investment, but they were supposed to do certain things, such as adhere to certain fiscal targets, monetary targets, reform their tax system, and all that. So a group of us would work on designing and negotiating those performance targets. So that really was a very important part of my career experience.

Q: To follow up on that area, what was the reaction of the Latin American countries to this program under the Alliance for Progress? Was it generally welcomed, or was there certain resistance to some of the strings that might have been attached?

BLOOMFIELD: You will hear people say that this sort of thing was resented as being patronizing or paternalistic. I didn't see it that way, and I'm as sensitive as anybody who has worked in the Latin America area to the kinds of problems that you can get into by seeming to interfere in their affairs. You have to remember that back in those days there was much more sense between the United States and the Latin American countries

of being involved in a common enterprise. The Alliance, you know, was a very popular program. After all, Kennedy was revered like a saint. You'd go into hovels in the back country of Peru and there would be a picture of him on the wall. And at the official level there was a feeling that the United States was really putting its money where its mouth was, in effect.

Now, we would argue about targets. After all, from their point of view each target was difficult and probably unreasonable, and from our point of view, it was something else. So there was a lot of negotiating that went on. But I never sensed—and I worked on both the Chilean and the Brazil programs, which were our two largest programs, and I subsequently went to Brazil and worked on it there—I never really felt that there was any resentment of that sort. Now, Senator Fulbright, I think because of some of his staff people, got the bug in his ear that this was bad. You know, that bilateral aid was bad just for the reasons that you alluded to, that it was involving the United States in interfering in these countries' internal affairs. And so he worked for, and succeeded really, in diverting a lot of the money from the bilateral program into the InterAmerican Development Bank on the theory that if it was done that way, that these political problems wouldn't arise. Well, it ended up being completely the opposite of what he said, because what happened is that instead of working out these requirements, these strings as you call them, bilaterally, which was at least kept within the framework of quiet diplomacy, the US Government then tried to apply conditions in the multilateral lending agencies where it was all out in the open, and that really did arouse a great deal of antagonism toward the United States. So anyway, it just shows you that sometimes we don't know what the consequences of our actions really are.

Q: You mentioned going to Brazil in a dual capacity. I think you indicated that was about 1968, so that would have been during a new administration with President Nixon. Did this affect the Alliance for Progress program in terms of its character or orientation?

BLOOMFIELD: Yes. By '68 it was quite evident that all was not well with the Alliance. And all was not well largely because of political developments within Latin America. So even

at the end of Johnson's term the Alliance was running out of steam and running into all kinds of different problems. The advent of Nixon, I think, only accelerated that trend; he didn't really start it. But he accelerated it because Nixon and Kissinger really had very little brief for Latin America. By that time, of course, we were mired in Vietnam. They were preoccupied with trying to get us out of that situation. There was much more attention to European matters. In short, Latin America got a very low priority and within a few years the Alliance kind of petered out. It just sort of disappeared.

But in Brazil, itself, there were local circumstances which affected the program there. I was sent there just at the end of the Johnson Administration, just before the elections of '68. And I was sent there to continue this $150 million a year program lending policy. And to be the guy on the spot that dealt with the Finance Minister. So I spent the summer and part of the fall working with Washington and with the Brazilians trying to work out next year's program, which had all the usual targets in it. Then in December 1968 there was a coup within a coup in Brazil. Before that, although there had been a military government, it was a fairly bland military government, and there was still a Congress and quite a bit of freedom. But there would been some terrorism started, and there was a sort of populism that was still around. Anyway, the military tightened up, and they clamped down very, very hard and started arresting people and censoring the press. They closed the Congress and just sent it home. The result of that was that Washington reacted to it, at least the Congress did, and we were forced to stop doing any program lending because it was now considered to be a really dictatorial government.

So I suddenly found myself without a job as it were, except that there were many other interesting things that happened, and instead of doing what I thought I was going to do, which was to worry about Brazil's macro-economic policy, I got involved for the next three years in a whole series of mainly trade-related problems between Brazil and the United States. This was a real education for me because it taught me a lot about domestic US politics and how it affects foreign policy. The most difficult one, I guess, was the soluble coffee dispute which revolved around powdered coffee that the Brazilians were making

and shipping to this country, which affected one or two American makers of instant coffee who mobilized Congressman Wilbur Mills, who was then one of the most powerful men in the Congress—he was head of the Ways and Means Committee—and he demanded that we do something about this. It caused a lot of political difficulties.

So I worked on that problem and finally we did manage to solve it. And then there were other problems of a similar nature, trade-related problems, such as disagreements over US wheat exports to Brazil, imports into the US of Brazilian textiles, and several other things. It was a real education and it stimulated my interest in going beyond economics as a career specialty and getting into the political side of things. Fortunately it worked out that I could do that after leaving Brazil. That's another chapter.

Q: Would you like to get into that chapter, how you broadened your sphere of activities?

BLOOMFIELD: By my third year in Brazil, the last year of my tour, I was frankly growing tired of economics and, as I say, I became interested in how domestic economic interests in the United States affected our relations with countries and our ability to pursue overall US interests there. This was the question of the intermeshing between domestic interests and foreign policy. As my tour was coming at a close, something happened that just shows you how sometimes small things have large consequences in our lives.

During that last year there was a conference in Brazil put on by the Hudson Institute, whose chief guru in those days was Herman Kahn. I don't know whether you remember Herman Kahn or not; but he was quite a colorful character; not the usual sort of dry intellectual, but a rather large, both physically and intellectually, figure, a showman really, and one who liked to go against the conventional wisdom of the day. So Kahn put on this conference in Brazil. I don't even remember who sponsored it or why, but it drew a lot of attention and I covered it. I went to it for three days. And I realized that my mental batteries had run down; and I was very stimulated by all of these big thoughts, and speculations, about globalism and all that. And I said to myself, “You know I'd really like to go back to the

university for a year.” I'd been at Harvard in '59 and '60 to study economics, so this was ten years later. So I wrote to—I think Fred Chapin was Director of Personnel, or maybe he was in ARA—but, anyway, I wrote to somebody back in the Department that I knew and I said, “Look, my tour here is coming to an end. What I would really like to do is have a year of senior training. I don't want to go to the Senior Seminar, I'd like to get away from the bureaucracy, away from all of that.” And I said, “I know exactly where I want to go. I want to go to the Center for International Affairs at Harvard.” And there's an anecdote connected with that.

When I was at Harvard in '59, sweating out economics, and I mean sweating it out, I'd been out of school about seven years then and was very rusty and here I was competing with all these young, bright Harvard students. And everything turned out fine and after the first semester's exams I got good marks, and I relaxed. But there was a period in the Fall there when I thought, “My God, you know, I'm never going to get this stuff and I'll disgrace myself and the Foreign Service.” There were several of us FSOs there feeling the same emotions.

But at any rate, I was walking across Harvard Yard one day and I bumped into Walter Stoessel. And Walt was senior to me in age, and in career. He was already, I guess, a senior officer, or almost one, but I knew him slightly. He asked me what I was doing there, and I told him, and asked what he was doing there. He said, “Well, I'm a fellow, at a new program called the Bowie Seminar.” That was, you know, an unofficial nickname after Bob Bowie who was the first Director. “...at the Center for International Affairs.” And I said, “What do you do exactly?” He said, “Well, its funny you should ask that. There aren't any requirements. The only requirement is that we get together once a week and have sherry and listen to some guy from the faculty pontificate at lunch.” And he said, “The rest of the time we just do what we want to do. We can audit courses, we can't take them for credit because they don't want us grinding away. We're just supposed to follow our own interests.”

Well, of course, the contrast between what he was doing, which sounded like paradise, and what I was doing just stayed with me. So ten years later I thought, “Ah, ha! I want to do what Walt Stoessel was doing back in '59 and '60.” So, anyway, I wrote to the Department and, fortunately, maybe they didn't look up my record and realize they'd already sent me to Harvard once. At any rate, whatever the reason, they decided that was a good idea and they sent me up here as a fellow. There were two of us here that year from the Department: Dick Smyser, who I think is now the Deputy UN High Commissioner for refugees. So I didn't look at an economics book, or course, for the whole year. I really wanted to concentrate on politics; and what I was most interested in was, as I said, the way foreign policy gets made and is affected by domestic interests. The politics of it. I spent the year reading what was available in those days on that subject.

We were required to write a paper in the Spring semester and present it at a seminar at the Center. And I wrote a paper in which I took all this sort of general, theoretical stuff that I'd been reading about this question— a lot of it was bureaucratic politics, that was all the fad in those days—but then I took four case studies, which just happened to be problems that I'd worked on in the Department, which made it easy to research the cases since they were all in my head. And I wrote this paper called “Who Makes American Foreign Policy?” It's really amazing. I mean people still come up to me and cite that paper, even today. People will say—because, you know, they keep it on file at CFIA—people will say, “You know, I came across a paper of yours.” And it got a lot of attention; in fact, Albert Hirschman, who was then on the faculty at Harvard and the CFIA, wanted me to publish it. He even talked to some people at Yale Press; but those were the days when one still had to get clearance in the Department and there were certain people in the Department who felt that my paper, shall we say, was somewhat critical of their policies. There was one individual in particular and he wouldn't clear the thing to be published. So it never got published. But anyway, it's still around and it still gets footnoted occasionally.

At any rate, when I finished that year at Harvard, I was asked to come down to the Department, to ARA, and head up what was a policy planning office in ARA, or a regional policy office, and you, of course, were my counterpart in East Asia. I spent four years doing that. I guess the most interesting part of that period was working with Henry Kissinger when—like Columbus—he discovered Latin America only four hundred years later.

And then from there I went as Ambassador to Ecuador.

Q: Before you get into that, it's interesting that you were obviously in the Latin American Bureau at the time that Henry Kissinger launched his Global Outlook Program to try to get people who had focused on one area into another area to broaden their experience, and apparently you were not considered to be that much focused. Was it your assignment in between at Harvard that impressed him?

BLOOMFIELD: I don't know what impressed him. You know the story was supposed to be that after spending some time with us Latin Americanists, he felt that we were all too parochial, too inbred, and needed to be broadened; and so he ordered this program by which we were to be transferred out to other areas and that was to become a policy for the entire Department.

Well, I think, there was probably something to that. When I look back on my own career, I wish that I'd had more out-of-area assignments, because I think it does broaden you. And I think it's very helpful. On the other hand, I think there was a certain amount of vindictiveness associated with that whole thing because, you know, Kissinger misjudged the Latin Americans really very badly. He tried to promote a policy there which, I think, just backfired. And, you know, there was a little bit of sour grapes about the whole thing and so he turned on the FSOs who worked on the area. I must say, however, in spite of the fact that I told him almost from the beginning that I didn't think the policy he was pushing would work, I got along with Kissinger. As is well known, he was pretty critical—he could be

pretty biting with many people—but he never treated me that way. He always treated me with a great deal of respect and, you know, we just hit it off; even though, as I say, there came a time when I told him that I didn't think that what he was trying to do was going to work. And it didn't. But, to his credit he didn't take it out on me. He was still Secretary of State when I got my ambassadorship.

Q: Could you describe how you had contact with Kissinger, and what sort of things you worked on?

BLOOMFIELD: Well, when he came over to be Secretary of State one of the first things that happened was the Year of Europe. You know, he tried to breathe new life into the Alliance. And he made a series of proposals to the Europeans about working more closely together on various things. And they rebuffed him. And part of this—I guess there was still a very Gaullist government in France—I think the Foreign Minister was Michel Jobert, who was fairly anti-American as I recall—at any rate, this really angered Kissinger. He really was very upset with the Europeans. So, partly because of that, he decided to look elsewhere, and he got this idea in his head that we should start thinking about a Pacific Basin pole, which would be the United States, Japan and Latin America. And the Europeans could go hang.

That was part of it. Part of it was just sheer accident in that after he became Secretary there was an UN General Assembly session, and, as you know, it's customary at each General Assembly that the Secretary of State has a luncheon for the ambassadors from the various regional groupings. So there's always a Latin American lunch; and Kissinger went to that and he wanted a speech written—a very short speech, kind of a toast really—and I wrote something which he threw away because he wanted something more dramatic than I was prepared to write.

So he talked about the need for repairing relations between Latin America and the United States which by that time had fallen into some disrepair—the Nixon policy became known

as “benign neglect”. So Kissinger proposed a new dialogue between the United States and Latin America. Now, I'm not sure that he really meant to do more than make a rhetorical flourish at this luncheon which would then be forgotten. But whether he meant it to be serious or not, the Latins took it very seriously. And they went back to Latin America, and within about a month there was a meeting of Latin American Foreign Ministers in Bogota to respond to Kissinger's call for a new dialogue.

So this thing was just launched, you know. And he immediately came to ARA and said, “Look, we are into this thing—we've got to formulate our plan, our strategy for dealing with the Latins.” And since that was supposed to be my business in the Bureau—I was supposed to be the policy planner—I was given the job of coming up with all the memos, proposing a strategy to Kissinger. As I remember, he was in heavy negotiations at that point with the Arabs over the Arab-Israeli thing. Jack Kubisch was the Assistant Secretary of State for ARA; and Jack and I and maybe one or two others would go up to Kissinger's office usually about 6:00 at night. Then we'd wait up there for an hour, sometimes two hours, while Kissinger dealt with various other people—mostly the Arabs—and then we'd finally get in to see him at some un-Godly hour and then we'd go over all this with him for a couple of hours. And, of course, he was a complete neophyte on Latin America so it wasn't easy, and he's the kind of man who doesn't just take what you say. I mean he's got a very sharp, questioning mind, so you had to be sure that you knew what you were talking about.

That all started in, I guess, December and the first meeting of this “New Dialogue” was to be a meeting of Foreign Ministers in Mexico City, which I think was in February. That would have been—let's see—'74? Wait a minute, we have to go back. Nixon's second term must have started in January of '73. He made Kissinger Secretary of State, I think, that summer—yes, this would have been February of '74. Anyway, I got a real workout because I had to write speeches for him and statements, and so forth. I wasn't the only

one working on it, but I was one of two or three that were doing it, and went to Mexico City with him.

At any rate, the New Dialogue didn't last very long. It got shot down by the very forces that I'd been referring to earlier—it ran up against politics in the United States. Very briefly what happened is that there was the meeting in Mexico City in February and another meeting of that same group of Foreign Ministers, and Kissinger, in Washington in April. And then there was supposed to be another plenary in Buenos Aires towards the end of the year, December, probably. And a lot of things that had been launched in February and April were supposed to come to fruition in Buenos Aires. There were working groups, and so forth. Well, sometime in that period the Congress finally passed the Generalized System of Preferences to give tariff concessions to the developing countries. And, of course, by that time the Arab oil embargo had happened. So they put in a clause which denied these preferences to any members of OPEC. Of course, there are two Latin American members of OPEC, Venezuela and Ecuador. As soon as that happened the Venezuelans and the Ecuadorians said, “We won't go to any meeting with the Secretary of State of the United States, until that provision is taken out of the law.” And, of course, all the other Latin American countries had to go along with them. So there never was a meeting in Buenos Aires. The New Dialogue just disappeared into thin air. And that was that.

Q: Before we proceed to Ecuador, you have referred to some of the unique qualities of the Latin American Bureau with respect to integration with AID. Could you describe how long that lasted, and also comment about the relations with other departments and agencies that you experienced in your position there in the ARA Bureau, and how that affected our policy toward Latin America?

BLOOMFIELD: Yes, the integration of the AID and the State Bureaus for Latin America lasted far longer than it probably should have. I mean, it continued long after the Alliance was a dead dodo, and long after our aid program—bilateral aid program—was very

significant in Latin America. But, you know, as with all institutions there's a certain amount of inertia. My recollection is that it was finally disentangled sometime in the mid '70s.

While it lasted, and particularly when our economic assistance was a major factor, I think it worked rather well. Probably from the point of view of the AID bureaucracy, it was not—at least initially—not looked upon with much favor, because they were afraid that they were going to be subordinated to a bunch of short-term political types from the Foreign Service. I think it turned out that that didn't happen. As I said before, there were a number of offices in which the AID man was the senior man. In other words, he was responsible for political as well as economic relations. And by and large people got used to it and it worked pretty well. In the offices where the State Department fellow was the Country Director, or Office Director, the Deputy Director was always an AID officer.

Now, you asked about relations with other agencies. Well that, of course, gets into our famous inter-agency coordinating mechanisms.

Inter-agency coordination, as you know, has always been a problem for the State Department, because on the one hand it is supposed to be in charge of advising the President on our overall policy towards foreign countries and implementing his policies. On the other hand, depending on the part of the world you're talking about, there are many other agencies that are not part of the State Department that operate abroad. So coordinating all these agencies is a problem, always. It was probably particularly acute in Latin America because Latin America traditionally has been a place in which a large number of US Government departments operate. That's because the interdependence, to use that cliche, between Latin America and the United States is so great. Since we have many interests there you get an atypical US mission. In Latin America you'll have an AID mission in addition to the usual military attach#s that you find in every embassy. You'll frequently have a military advisory group—for some countries a quite large military advisory group which is independent of the attach# office.

I remember in Ecuador we happened to have a tracking station, a NASA tracking station, so you had those people. You have, of course, these days the narcotics people—the DEA. You have very often an agricultural attach# who reports to the Department of Agriculture, who is not a Foreign Service Officer. You have, sometimes, Treasury operators who are involved, I don't know, in sort of FBI- like operations, law enforcement. Anyway, you've got this plethora of government agencies, each of whom looks to his own agency in Washington as his boss. And yet the poor Ambassador is there and is supposed to see that all these guys cooperate and carry out their mission in a way that is consistent with our overall objectives in the country.

At any rate this problem, because it was more acute in Latin America than elsewhere, fairly early on came to be a real issue with people back in State's Latin American bureau. And there were a couple of people who decided to tackle it and to try to do something about it. One of those was someone I mentioned earlier and that's Bob Sayre, who has now retired, who finished his career as Ambassador to Brazil during the first Reagan term. Bob was in ARA, and Bob felt that something ought to be done about this. Anyway, without going into all the details, by the time I got to Washington in 1972 the second time around there was something called the CASP which stood for Country Assessment and Strategy Paper—whether I've got the right name anymore, I'm not sure. Basically, the CASP was supposed to be an inter-agency planning document, and it really was a vehicle by which the Department of State attempted to enforce its role as the coordinator of policy. And the way it worked, very briefly, was that each mission in a country was responsible for preparing a CASP paper. And the CASP paper, you know, set out our goals in the country —or our interests first, then our goals; and then took each agency program and tried to fit it in to these overall objectives. As years went on, it became more and more complex with budgetary figures attached to each one of these agency operations.

Anyway, that paper was prepared in the mission under the guidance of the ambassador and the preparation involved all the agency representatives. It was sent in to Washington,

and then in Washington there were and still are I guess, inter-agency groups to which each agency operating abroad sends a representative. They are supposed to be chaired by the Assistant Secretary but in practice are usually chaired by one of his deputies. So they get these CASP papers sent in from the field, and then there's a great deal of negotiating, and back scratching, and fighting, at the CASP meeting. And then there was a paper issued by the inter-agency group saying to the mission, “Okay, we've got your paper, we've made the following changes, and these are the things you're supposed to do.”

At any rate, my office, among its other responsibilities, was the CASP office; we coordinated all that. We wrote the annual instructions to the field, and were the staff for the inter-agency meetings. The process encountered a good deal of resistance, as you might expect, because it was looked upon, probably rightly so, as a kind of pain in the ass.

There were some people, including ambassadors, who really just didn't want to have anything to do with it. Most of them saw it, however, as a useful way of reinforcing their own authority and they cooperated with it. Similarly in Washington some of the country directors looked upon it as a turf problem for them because it meant that other people were sort of getting into their areas. But be that as it may, my own view is that something like that is really essential in the government, at least in any region in the world where we have more than just sort of traditional diplomatic relations. In a place like Latin America, I think it's essential that we have some procedure to try to ride herd on all these divergent bureaucratic interests.

Q: Ambassador Bloomfield, could you describe then how your appointment as ambassador to Ecuador came about?

BLOOMFIELD: Well, you know, as usual when you know that you're coming to the end of an assignment you start thinking about what happens next, and I felt at that point in my career that I could aspire to an ambassadorial appointment. So, just in case anybody

might have overlooked that fact, I reminded some people in the Department that that would be my hope. Actually, one or two possibilities came along but they didn't pan out, and then somewhat to everyone's surprise, the fellow who was the Ambassador to Ecuador decided to come back to the States. I don't think he was quite due to leave Ecuador but for one reason or another he wanted to come back to the US, I think for personal reasons. At any rate, the post opened up somewhat unexpectedly and I was the Department's candidate. As you know the Department puts up probably two or three choices from the career corps, and then somebody in the White House who is concerned with the political patronage puts up outsiders. And the White House, the President or someone underneath him, has to make a choice. Well, at any rate, in my case the career choice won out, so I went to Ecuador. That was in early '76 in what turned out to be the waning months of the Ford Administration.

So I arrived there, I think in March, and only stayed 22 months because the embassy in Lisbon became suddenly vacant early in the Carter Administration when Frank Carlucci, who was then in Lisbon was pulled back to become the Deputy CIA Director, and so I was pulled out of Ecuador a bit sooner than I had expected and was sent to Portugal which, of course, didn't displease me.

Q: During your period in Ecuador were there some major issues or crises in bilateral relations?

BLOOMFIELD: We had some longstanding issues and, in addition at that point one overriding policy objective. After I arrived we had a crisis that was unforeseen.

The policy objective of the Carter Administration in Ecuador was to encourage the Ecuadorian military to return the government to civilian control. That accorded with Carter's policies in Latin America, pushing human rights, democracy, and so on. By the time I arrived in Ecuador the military had been in power for five or six years. Things had not turned out well for them. The military president, Rodriguez Lara, had recently been

forced by his colleagues to resign. The junta was formed with representatives of the three services, and the junta committed itself to returning the government to democratic processes.

So when I went there my general guidance was to do what I could to encourage that process. That was the general policy objective. The main issue, the main bone of contention between the US and Ecuador, was the fishing dispute. And that grew out of the fact that Ecuador was a country that not only had proclaimed the 200 mile economic zone, but was one of the few countries in the world that actually proclaimed a 200 mile territorial zone. That meant, as far as Ecuador was concerned, any ship or vessel that ventured within 200 miles was in effect entering Ecuadorian territory and had to get permission and obey Ecuadorian law. The problem was that at that point the United States did not recognize the 200 mile economic zone, much less a territorial zone. Our tuna fishermen, who were mostly from San Diego, California, would venture into what Ecuador considered to be its waters and get arrested by the Ecuadorian Navy, and pulled into port; and their catch would be seized, and they would be fined. And, of course, this immediately aroused the Congressmen from California, as well as other organizations, to raise hell, to be quite blunt about it. So we were constantly having problems with Ecuador. At one point some years before I arrived there, the Congress had passed legislation which in effect ordered the executive to cut off military aid to any country that seized American flag vessels for fishing in their waters.

Fortunately, by the time I arrived in Ecuador that problem was much less acute than it had been. The reason it was much less acute was that the US was beginning to change its own attitudes. We hadn't yet, as I recall, adopted the 200 mile economic zone—we did shortly thereafter—but we weren't taking such a firm position as we had been. In effect, the Department had decided to “encourage” our fishermen to buy fishing licenses from Ecuador. And so buying a license in effect was a recognition of Ecuador's jurisdiction.

The way that came about—I don't remember all the details—but there were some people in Washington who managed, I think quite skillfully, to convince the tuna fishing industry in California that instead of standing on their high horse or principle, they should realize that buying a fishing license was a hell of a lot less expensive than getting their catch seized and having their people arrested. So, by the time I got to Ecuador, we were able to resume our military assistance to the government and that provided us with a certain amount of leverage. That gave me the opportunity to politely and quietly point out that there was a connection between the speed that they returned to democratic rule and the US Government looking sympathetically upon their request for military aid.

But, as fate would have it, another problem came along which could have been much worse than the fishing disputes. The Gulf Oil Company got into a very bitter dispute with the Ecuadorian Government within a month or so after I got there. To try to summarize the nature of the problem: Texaco and Gulf had a consortium in Ecuador. They had gone in some years before and discovered oil. They had invested several hundred millions of dollars in developing the oil fields which lay on the other side of the Western chain of the Andes, and had built a pipe line from the interior across the Andes down to the coast to be able to export the oil.

During the military regime that took over in the early '70s, there was a continuing series of controversies and disputes between the government and the oil companies; mostly because the government had adopted a very nationalistic policy about oil, and the state oil company, which acted as a kind of government regulator of the oil business, pursued a pretty arbitrary line with the two American companies. Even though, when the junta took over from General Rodriguez Lara it was much less chauvinistic than the previous government, the people who were running the oil policy in the government were the same kinds of people that had always been there, very kind of Nasserite military officers. So that the relations between the companies and the government were quite bad; and the Gulf

Company in Ecuador seemed to be run by much more hard-nosed characters than the Texaco people who were in charge of Ecuador.

The Gulf Company simply decided one day that it would no longer surrender the foreign exchange that it was earning to the government until the government took care of some of its grievances. Texaco used its share of the oil produced in the field to supply its own refineries, but Gulf just sold the oil to third parties. So the Gulf people were selling oil on credit. I think they gave their customers 90 days credit. At the end of the 90 days, by which time they presumably were paid, they had to turn in the foreign exchange to the government at whatever share was stipulated by their contract. This meant that Gulf always owed the government something between $40 and $80 million in foreign exchange, sort of a floating debt. So one day Gulf announced that they weren't going to pay any of that until the government sat down with them and really seriously addressed their grievances. Well, the government reacted very, very sharply and pointed out to Gulf that they were a sovereign government and that they weren't going to be dictated to by a private company; and that under the Ecuadorian constitution any company that defied—broke the law—was subject to having its assets confiscated without compensation.

So here I could see one of these classical expropriation disputes breaking out, which meant that the US would be—the Executive, the State Department—would be caught between the US law, the Hickenlooper Amendment, which in effect mandated a cutoff of aid on the one hand, and its desire to have certain other things happen in Ecuador, like keeping the fishing controversy under control, and encouraging the government to return to democracy. In other words, if that kind of a dispute had broken out, if Gulf had actually been confiscated, my ability as Ambassador to have any influence on what went on in Ecuador would just have been blown sky high.

So I immediately set about trying to avoid this from happening. The government gave the companies—I think it was 60 days—to comply with the law, and at the end of the 60 days they would be confiscated. Well, my approach was to, on the one hand, push the

government and try to get it to address some of the company's grievances, which were real grievances, there's no doubt about it. On the other hand, I tried to press the company into compromising with the government. I had to work through the Department, I couldn't deal directly with the company's representatives in the US because this involved a general policy issue. So I was dealing mainly through the Legal Adviser's Office (L), who in turn was dealing with Gulf headquarters.

I was trying to get the Department to tell Gulf that if Gulf broke the law, simply thumbed its nose at the law, the US Government would consider itself not to be bound to try to defend Gulf's interests. I said that it was one thing to defend an American company's interests in which the company was being abused by a government. It was another thing to defend that company's interests if they were blatantly saying to the government, “We know there's a law that says so-and-so but we're not going to obey it.”

Well, of course, the Department never quite wanted to go that far but I will say, the person in L who was handling the matter—who now incidentally is the American Justice on the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Steve Schwebel—handled the companies very, very well. I obviously didn't have tapes of his telephone conversations with the company people but my impression is that in a subtle, but unmistakable way, he pointed out to them that they were going to create serious difficulties for themselves if they insisted on this.

The company, for their part, squeezed all the leverage out of this that it could. They kept dragging their feet. What we wanted them to do was to agree that, if I could get the Ecuadorian government to offer them a framework for negotiating, for addressing specific grievances, then they in turn would say, “Okay, we're satisfied that the government is now going to seriously respond and we'll pay our debts.” Anyway, they dragged this out until they were sure that they'd gotten the government to go as far as they could.

But even at that, at literally the eleventh hour, the very day before the deadline expired, they still hadn't agreed. So I finally called the fellow in Coral Gables who was—I guess he was president of the Gulf subsidiary that covered Latin America—and remonstrated with him for about a half an hour on the phone. So then they gave in. I think they'd already planned to. I could never be sure. At any rate, they paid what they owed which was, I think, maybe $80 million, and then the government began seriously negotiating with them.

I was, of course, putting pressure on the government to make that kind of an offer. The man who was the Minister for Petroleum Affairs was part of the problem. He was very nationalistic, almost a xenophobic character. So I couldn't do much with him. But the man I was dealing with was the President of the country. He was the Admiral who was the first among equals among the three junta members. He had the title of President, and he and I had a very good relationship. We worked together very well, and as it turns out he was really responsible for keeping the military's commitments about returning the country to democratic rule.

So whenever this crisis would get to a sticking point and some minister would be gumming up the works, I had a channel by which I could see the President directly without going through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or anybody else, and I would do that. And then he would take care of things. So, as I say, I was trying to cajole the Ecuadorians on the one side and the American company on the other to come to an agreement. At any rate, at the eleventh hour, almost midnight of the last day, Gulf gave orders to its bank in New York to make the payments.

After that there were more aftershocks as it were, crises that would occur in the negotiations themselves. But, still, we managed to get through those and eventually Gulf sold out. The Ecuadorian government bought them out and they paid, I think, $125 million and bought out their interests in the consortium, which left Texaco as a junior partner with the government.

Anyway, that crisis consumed most of my energies for the first six months of my tour.

The other issue which was something I worked on the entire time I was there, which was as I said only 22 months, was this question of returning the country to civilian rule. The problem there was that while the Admiral and the Navy were firm in that decision, the Army was the largest service and had the most fire power. The Army had some generals who weren't too sure that they really wanted to go out of the governing business, particularly, the Chief of Staff of the army had ambitions to run the country himself. Fortunately, he was not a charismatic leader. He didn't have full support within the Army. He had to contend with people under him who didn't really want him to get that power. Anyway, there was a sort of complicated game being played among the military, the three services, and obviously I only saw the tip of that iceberg; but I was able to weigh in at key times, both with the president, the Admiral, who was sympathetic, of course, and at times even directly with some of the army people, including the General who, we thought, wanted to take over—just to get the word to him, “Look, you know, if you do this, forget about getting any help from the United States. You're going to be a pariah.” We had some chips to play with there, because the Navy was very anxious to get some ships from us, some obsolete destroyers that they wanted to refit. So we held that bait out for them in case there was anybody in the Navy who had second thoughts. Anyway, it all worked out. The elections didn't take place until after I left there. I guess it was probably the following summer that they occurred.

Well, I probably should identify some of these people— did you want me to identify some of the people I've been talking about just to make it clear? I mentioned that there had been an army general who was president of Ecuador who had been deposed by his military colleagues before I got there. His name was Rodriguez Lara. And then the President with whom I was dealing was the Navy Chief of Staff, or CNO, whose name was Poveda, and he was the Navy representative on the junta but he was also given the post of president, so he was first among equals, you might say. The name of the Army Chief of Staff who we

were pretty sure had aspirations to take over, was Duran. And then, in the elections after I left, the man who became president was a fellow by the name of Jaime Roldos; and he was killed in a plane crash within about a year of taking over. He was succeeded by the vice president and the country has been a democracy, up until now at any rate.

Q: During the period you were that you were there, under this military junta, were there any issues involving human rights, or involving drugs?

BLOOMFIELD: Yes, to both questions. Already, by that time—and we're talking about more than ten years ago—already the drug problem was a serious problem. The cocaine problem. As you probably know, although Colombia is the largest manufacturing area for cocaine, the raw material comes mainly from Bolivia and Peru, and Ecuador was a transshipment point. Ecuador, being just on the border of Colombia, a lot of cocaine would come up from Peru through Ecuador into Colombia. So while there wasn't, in those days, any coca grown in Ecuador—not very much—it was a transit point and so there was a lot of interest in Washington in that. And this is sort of a typical situation. The people in Washington who were concerned about the drug problem were singleminded about it, of course. They were impatient if the host government didn't seem to be doing everything that they thought it should be doing, and didn't take into account the fact that we were dealing with a society, and a government, and political institutions, which were far different than our own, and which were less efficient, which were very often corrupt. And that, therefore, without invading the country and taking it over, it was not always possible to do everything the way the Drug Enforcement Agency thought should be done.

At any rate, I was under a great deal of pressure to keep pushing the government at the very highest levels to do more on drugs. Now, it was quite obvious to me that there was a loop here. I mean the DEA agent in the embassy was obviously feeding information back to his headquarters saying that, “Well, you know, the Ecuadorians aren't doing this, and they're not doing that, and gee, if we could only get the Ambassador to weigh in more heavily...” DEA would then insist on that through the inter-agency group. But,

more importantly, I think, they would go to their people in Congress, their Congressmen. And we had one guy from New York who was chairman of whatever subcommittee it is that deals with narcotics—I don't think he's around anymore. In fact I think he's one of the people who ended up with some problem of his own, if I'm not mistaken, eventually. Wasn't reelected. But, while he was there he was a very obnoxious character. He came to Ecuador at one point, and, you know, called me on the carpet, and claimed that I wasn't being diligent enough about following up on these things, which was not true. I mean I actually had taken it up with the President. I took it up periodically with the Minister of Justice who was a military officer. We did everything that we could, but you can't order another government around. But that little detail is always lost on these kinds of people. So that was the drug problem.

On the human rights front, we had problems, although, fortunately, the government did not have a policy of abusing people. It wasn't a Pinochet type military regime, by any stretch of the imagination. But there were incidents where peoples' human rights were infringed upon. There were two that I remember particularly. I shouldn't laugh, I mean, one of them was pretty tragic. The other one was more farcical than anything else.

There was a bishop, an Ecuadorian bishop—I think he was the bishop of Urubamba or some such and he was considered the Red Bishop because he was considered a leftist. Actually, I think, he was just somebody who was, you know, a reformer type. In that society, however, he was considered a radical. There was a meeting of bishops. I don't remember whether this was a meeting of the Ecuadorian Episcopate, or whether it was some special meeting. But, in any case, it took place in Urubamba, in this fellow's diocese and it was a meeting, as I recall, of all of the Ecuadorian bishops, and there were several American bishops who were invited, and who attended.

Now somebody in the intelligence services of the Ecuadorian Army had convinced this General Duran, the one I mentioned earlier that had presidential ambitions, that this was a conspiracy, that this was a bunch of clerical plotters. So they raided this meeting and

arrested all these guys. It was the most stupid thing you can imagine. I don't remember whether they just sort of kept them locked up wherever they were, or whether they took them into Quito or what.

But as soon as I heard about this, I went in and made very strong protests to the Foreign Ministry. And, you know, the poor Foreign Minister, whom I knew, he obviously thought this was a real disaster, but he had to sort of grit his teeth and be dignified about it, and say, well, he'd have to take it under advisement... I mean, his official stance had to be, look, this was an action taken by the Ecuadorian Government in its sovereign capacity, and he wasn't going to apologize to me at that point for it. But the result of that representation was that they let the Americans go right away. But they insisted that they get out—they expelled them from the country. So in order to make a gesture, a public gesture about this whole thing, I went out to the airport to see these guys off, and made sure my photograph was taken shaking their hands as they left. So that the Ecuadorian public would understand that as far as the American Ambassador was concerned, these two guys were respectable American clerics who were not participating in any plot. That was one incident, not a very—as it turned out—not a very serious one.

The other one was much more serious, and the details I don't think have ever come to light because this took place in a sugar mill down in the interior. There was a strike and some violence, I guess, among the strikers, and the—I think it must have been the police—went in there and killed a lot of people. And since there was still control over information in the country, it was never let out exactly what happened, or how many people died. But the information that we got was that as many as 20 to 25 people in there had been killed by the police forces. In that case, you know, there were no grounds for the US Ambassador to get involved directly. I did express to the government that if this were true, it would be a matter of serious concern. But they never admitted the whole story.

But human rights was not a kind of continuing problem there, because, as I said, by this time the government was committed to going back to democratic rule. So you had to give

them the benefit of the doubt, to some extent. The newspapers were relatively free to report, and the ordinary citizen was not, you know, abused in his personal freedom, and so forth. He could be. I mean he didn't have much protection if they wanted to, but it was not that kind of a government, put it that way.

Q: Is there any other aspect of your assignment to Ecuador that you would like to touch on?

BLOOMFIELD: Yes. It just occurred to me that it might be of some interest to future historians if I said a few words about Mrs. Carter's visit. She was asked by her husband to make a visit to—I think it was—six Latin American countries shortly after he became President. I guess there was a certain amount of dismay at first because the feeling was that Latin American men wouldn't take kindly to a woman coming down to deal with them about matters of state, and also that they might feel slightly offended that the President, instead of coming himself, sent his wife. That was partly an apprehension based on an exaggerated view of Latin American machismo.

Mainly because of the way Mrs. Carter conducted herself, that turned out not to be a problem. First of all, she was very well briefed by the time she arrived and she was all business, and she made it very clear from the outset that this was not a social occasion: this was not just a tour of symbolic value; that she was really there and really represented her husband, and really wanted to talk business. Her military interlocutors in Ecuador may have had some doubts about that—I think they probably did. But within about five minutes they realized that she was there to address problems, and furthermore, that she knew what she was talking about. It was very helpful because she reinforced everything I had been telling them about the importance that we attached to the retorno—as the return to democracy was called. And she also dealt with some of their other concerns. The tensions between Ecuador and Peru were running quite high at that time over their longstanding territorial dispute. And I think she was able to reassure the Ecuadorians that we would

attempt to see that they were not, shall we say, mistreated by the Peruvians. So it was a very useful visit.

Q: This is part two of the interview with Ambassador Richard Bloomfield being conducted in Boston on May 6th, 1988. The interviewer is Richard Nethercut, a retired Foreign Service Officer.

Ambassador Bloomfield, could you now turn to your assignment to Portugal and describe how that came about?

BLOOMFIELD: Well, I was in Ecuador—had been in Ecuador for about 20 months more or less, I guess, and I received a phone call one day from the Under Secretary for Personnel who said that the Secretary, Cyrus Vance, was going to propose my name to the White House to succeed Frank Carlucci in Lisbon. You could have knocked me over with a feather. I mean, it was the last thing that I expected at that point because I'd been in Ecuador only a short time. I might have thought, “Well, I'll finish Ecuador and if I'm lucky I'll get another ambassadorial assignment, maybe in a slightly larger country in Latin America.”

But the idea of going off to Portugal had never entered my head. And I later asked George Vest, who was then the Assistant Secretary for EUR, how they happened to pick me out of the hat. This was '78, so it was four years since the revolution which threw out a decades-old authoritarian government. While the early concern about a Communist takeover was now largely abated and the constitution had been promulgated, and there was a civilian government, there was still concern about Portuguese stability and also the economy was in bad shape. So George said that they were looking for somebody who spoke Portuguese, which I did since I had served in Brazil; somebody that had some background in economics, which I had; and finally they wanted somebody who had already had experience as Chief of Mission. They didn't want to send a first-time ambassador there.

And finally they wanted somebody who they thought was tough, but, as George put it, “in a nice way.”

So, at any rate, I left Ecuador, in January, and I asked the Department for a quick refresher course at FSI since I hadn't spoken Portuguese in about seven years by that time. And also continental Portuguese is quite a bit different than Brazilian Portuguese. So they agreed to that, and I spent a few weeks in Washington at FSI trying to a) brush up my Portuguese, and also learn the Lisbon accent. And then I arrived in Lisbon in March.

It was a very interesting time. As I said, the democracy was launched, it had been launched in mid-'76, so by the time I got there democracy was less than two years old. This is in a country that from 1928 to 1974 had been ruled by only two men, Salazar from the late '20s to the late '60s; and then Caetano. It was a country that had gone through real trauma, not only in terms of a revolution at home, but in their rather disorderly retreat from their colonies in Africa. It was really the African independence wars—wars of independence—that precipitated the overthrow of the government in Lisbon; the Portuguese military had become so fed up with the rather corrupt, inefficient, and backward government that they were fighting under at home, and in effect they turned around on their masters and kicked them out. That's really what happened.

And then there was this period of a year or so when it looked as if the Communist party was going to pick up all the marbles. Then that was stopped by some military men, General Eanes, who later became president, and a semi-presidential system with a parliament and a prime minister was installed.

But when I got there the question of the future of Portugal was still very much up in the air. There was still concern that, with all of these contending forces in the society that had been unleashed by the end of the old regime, there could be a threat to political stability and constitutional government. The economy was in pretty bad shape. So it was a difficult time.

And I had always thought to myself and I say this with a great immense respect for Frank Carlucci, because he really went there under very difficult circumstances and did a fine job—but I have always thought that, in a way, his job was easier than mine. What I mean by that is that when he went there it was very clear who the good guys were, and who the bad guys were. The bad guys were the Communists and the people in the military who were pro-Communist who were allied with them. The good guys were almost everyone else in the country. In other words, all of the democratic parties from the right to the socialist left, were the good guys. And it was very clear that the embassy's role, and the US role, was to support the good guys against the bad guys.

Well, by the time I got there the good guys had supposedly won and now they were fighting among themselves. And each one of them, each party and each individual in this struggle, wanted to use the US Embassy, or the US Ambassador, as an instrument...I mean to use this in their internal power struggles. So I found that one of toughest tasks in Portugal was to keep neutral, to keep the appearance of neutrality. I must say the Portuguese are not very good about letting you do that. I mean, I loved them, and I admire them. But, like all of us, they have many wonderful qualities and a few not so wonderful ones. One of the not so wonderful ones is that they engage in very personalistic kind of politics, and it's the kind of attitude that if you're not with me, you're against me. So they sometimes would interpret my attempts to be neutral, to be partisan. In other words, “Well, if this guy isn't doing what I'd like him to do to enhance my political clout, he must be supporting my opponents” kind of thing. And you were constantly walking on egg shells as far as that was concerned.

And then there was another problem. By the time Frank left Portugal, the conventional wisdom in Portugal was that the US Government had picked out the Socialist Party as its chosen instrument, and that we were backing Mario Soares, the leader of the Socialist Party. And that we would do everything to favor that party and, in effect, to help it defeat its

opponents. People would tell me right to my face that they knew this was our policy and it would be in the newspapers. It was really just sort of taken for granted.

Now part of this had come about simply because the Socialists were the largest democratic party in the country. They were the government for the first two years, and to their credit, of all the parties they were the ones who, when the Communist were threatening back in '75, got out in the streets. They mobilized their people. I mean they risked their necks to confront these guys because the Communists, after all, had support of some of the important military officers who had led the revolution. So for all those reasons it was inevitable that the US would be seen to be working with that party. That was part of it.

The other part of it was, there was a personal problem between Frank and the leader of their main opposition party, the Social Democratic Party. And I doubt that I knew all the whys and wherefores after so many years had passed. Francisco Sacarneiro was the leader of that party and later became Prime Minister. By the time Frank left, they weren't speaking to one another. The people in the PSD generally felt that the Embassy was completely biased against them.

So I had to try to overcome that. I mean it wasn't just a case of starting out with a clean slate and then trying to keep an appearance of being nonpartisan. We were already considered to be partisan. I had to work our way back to being neutral. So that was fun, that kept me busy. One of the first things I did, of course, was to invite Sacarneiro to lunch, just one-on-one at the residence, and that was a signal to him, and to his people, that from now on we were going to be friends. And we were, we became very good friends, as a matter of fact. He was killed, tragically, in a plane wreck after he'd been Prime Minister for a year and had done very well. He had won the Parliamentary elections and within a couple of weeks was killed in this crash. It was a great tragedy for Portugal because he obviously had a lot to contribute to the country.

At any rate, I spent a little more than four years there which is a fairly long tour for an Ambassador. I guess I could have stayed there another year or so because, as far as I know, they weren't trying to move me, but I retired to come up to Boston to take this job.

Q: Now your tour in Portugal spanned the two administrations. I wonder whether there was much of a shift in policy, or whether you felt that your position was affected by the change in administrations?

BLOOMFIELD: Well, I was really very lucky in that respect because there was really no change in policy. You know, if I'd been in Latin America I'm sure I would have seen a distinct change in policies. But you see there was nothing in the Portuguese situation which would cause or give problems to an American president whether he was a conservative Republican or a liberal Democrat. In effect, what we had there was a truly democratic regime; they were pro-American. We had an airbase in the Azores which was very important to us. They were willing to let us stay there, and they wanted close relations with the United States. So there was no reason for policy shifts, I mean major policy shifts. Obviously there were some changes in style, or availabilities of monies, or whatever, but, no, I had no difficulty in that respect.

Q: Were there points of view within the US Government— you mentioned the airbase on the Azores—were there issues on which there were different positions within the US Government?

BLOOMFIELD: Only one comes to mind. The Socialists were out of office within six months after I got there. They had a coalition and the coalition broke up and the President, in effect, fired the Prime Minister as he has the right to do under constitution. And then there were a series of interim governments. And there was finally an election and the Social Democratic Party, that I just mentioned, won, and Sacarneiro became Prime Minister.

Now, although their philosophy of government and policy was more akin to the Reagan policy, than the Socialists had been, they were also more nationalistic. They thought that we were taking liberties under our treaty as far as the base in the Azores was concerned. And this became, not a theoretical issue, but a real issue, because we were at that point ferrying equipment and men into the Persian Gulf area, the Middle East. There were problems...as I recall, we were trying to build up our ability to intervene especially after the Iranian revolution. We were trying to make deals with Somalia and some of the Emirates for bases, and landing rights, and we were stockpiling equipment, and we'd created this strike force down in Florida which was going into the Gulf.

Oh, I know what it was. It was probably the Afghanistan invasion that touched all that off. That's what it was. The Russian occupation took place in January of '79, I think? So we were using the Azores to periodically send a couple of squadrons of aircraft to Egypt to show the flag, in effect, and for other things. The Portuguese came to us and said, “Hey, wait a minute, what's going on here? First of all, its our base, its not your base. We, in effect, don't rent, we give you...have conceded certain facilities to you.” Which technically was true. “And secondly, our understanding is that it's to be used in connection with NATO. We're a NATO country, and you're a NATO country, but if you want to use it for any out-of-NATO operations, you have to get our permission.” And the Defense Department immediately said, “No, we're not going to do that.” Of course, we'd been used to having our own way there because we had pretty much under Salazar, and during the turmoil of the revolution nobody paid much attention to it. And also this was a new kind of situation.

And also, the Portuguese were quite sensitive about this Middle East thing because during the Salazar administration in '73 in the Middle East war, we tried to send...we were ferrying, I guess it was, supplies to the Israeli Army, and the French and all of our other stalwart allies wouldn't let us use their airfields. And we pretty much insisted that we use the Azores. And when the Arabs put on the oil embargo they cut Portugal off completely

from oil. So they suffered for that. So when this thing started repeating itself, you see, six years later, even though it was a different government, they remembered all of that.

So there was a period in which the Defense Department kept insisting that we insist on our rights. I mean they sent me telegrams that were drafted by some lawyers in Defense which were cockamamie stuff. I just pointed out to them, I said, “Look, this is a sovereign government and there is nothing in our agreement with them that says that we can use the base for anything we see fit.” And I said, “If you really want to get down to it, if you want to insist on your rights, then they can just drive a bunch of fire trucks out on the airstrip and you're not going to get your planes in there. So why make trouble for yourself? Why not just tell us to go in and request it through a diplomatic note?” And I said, “I'm sure they will give permission every time. But why make trouble for yourself by insisting on principle when in fact it's a very dubious principle to begin with?” So eventually they caved in and we did that. We would do what every other embassy does everywhere else in the world, and go in and give them a note, and they'd reply almost immediately and say, “Yes, go ahead.”

But other than that I can't think of any other thing. The main problem I had really was the lack of resources... what I suppose every Ambassador feels. But I really felt that we short-changed the Portuguese terribly. You know, that base was very important strategically and still is for us. We had problems with the Spaniards using Torrejon base near Madrid. The Spaniards were very, very strict on what we could use it for. Well, you remember even in the Libyan operation that our planes from England had to fly all the way around because the Spaniards wouldn't let them fly over their territory.

Well, here we had this base in the middle of the Atlantic that the Portuguese were letting us use for operations in the Middle East. And I felt, and the Portuguese felt, that we should aid them—they wanted military aid. And after all, this was a NATO army that they were building— supposed to be building up—and we were being niggardly, you know, the amount of aid that we were offering them every time the base agreement came up for

renewal, was really pretty poor. I've forgotten the exact amounts but, it was $20-$30 million dollars or something. Then they'd look down the other end of the Mediterranean, and the Greeks and the Turks were getting several hundred million a year. So that was a constant frustration for me, and as it turned out while I was there the treaty came up for renewal—the base agreement came up for renewal. So we started negotiating. I was the head of the American team, and there was a special diplomat, the head of the Portuguese team. We really got nowhere. I mean we would have these meetings, and these people would come out from Washington. We couldn't make any commitments on the money side, and they weren't going to make any commitments without something concrete from us. As it turned out I left there still in the early stages of those negotiations; and my successor, fortunately, had better luck with the Bureau of the Budget than I did and he eventually got enough stakes to put on the table so that the agreement was renewed.

But we're having the same problem now. I saw a couple of weeks ago that the Portuguese Prime Minister was coming to visit President Reagan and the big issue was that they felt that we were not giving them enough aid, and that there was some question as to whether they would renew the base agreement. So, its a constant problem. I always felt that we took them too much for granted. You know, its the squeaky wheel that gets the grease, and they never squeaked very loud so we said, “Well, no problem.”

Q: Were you in Portugal at a time when the issue of Angola was a concern to the Portuguese, or is that something in their past?

BLOOMFIELD: Oh, no. Not their past, it's a constant obsession with the Portuguese. The Portuguese, most of them, were heavily marked by their African past. They took great pride in the fact that they were the European country that, in a sense, explored the rest of the world to the East, not to the West, because they really had to share that honor with the Spanish. But, you know, Africa, they were the first ones who sailed around there, and India, and so forth. Also, many Portuguese, of course, served in the military as conscripts in Africa and they fought this long war against the African independence movements. And

there was something like almost a million Portuguese that came back from Africa after the independence. So you couldn't have a conversation with a Portuguese for more than ten minutes without Africa coming up, no matter what you'd been talking about. So it was of concern to them, but it was also a concern to the United States, and it was really for that reason that I had some involvement with that situation because we were, at that point, trying to get...well, during the Carter administration...to get the South African government to comply with the UN resolutions and grant Namibia its independence. And part of that problem, as it still is if you read the papers the past few days, is the Cuban troop presence in Angola. And since the Portuguese had special knowledge of the country, we would periodically consult with them about Angola. I remember Don McHenry used to come through Lisbon when he'd go to Luanda to negotiate with the Angolans, and so forth. So, yes, it was a fairly lively issue.

Q: Were there other topics, or incidents, that you would consider major achievements or frustrations during your period in Portugal?

BLOOMFIELD: It's much more difficult for me in that tour to point to specific achievements, because it really was a situation in which, while we had a great deal of influence, the degree to which we could effect internal developments was much, much less than the case of, say Ecuador, when I was there. So what I can say was accomplished but I can't take any particular credit for it was that by our general posture of trying to show the Portuguese people that we were interested in their country, that we had good relations with them, that we respected their leaders and had them to Washington, that we did give them assistance, even though they didn't think it was enough, that by our general attitude and presence we did to try to reinforce democracy in the country.

And I must say, as I said before, when I came there democracy was still a fairly fragile flower. By the time I left it was much clearer that it was going to last. Democracy was going to last, and the instability would be the political instability of frequently changing governments, but the democratic system was there to stay. Now, I don't take any particular

credit for that, but certainly the United States just by its general attitude, and as I say, encouragement made some contribution. After all, the Portuguese did it, we didn't do it.

Other than that I did manage to keep the Azores base thing on a fairly even keel in spite of some of the problems that we had. I did work, for instance, with the Portuguese Air Force and managed to get them airplanes that they wanted. They had started that when I first got there. They wanted F-5's and they didn't have the money to buy F-5's, so we eventually found some less hot airplanes they could refit. They got a very nice squadron of aircraft. So it was things like that, just trying to be responsive and that was about it, I think. They were difficult to work with at times because of these internal political feuds, but on the other hand, they were basically friendly to us. They were, after all, very committed democrats. They're very conservative basically. The Socialist Party in Portugal is about as conservative a party as you'll find anywhere in the world, and very pro-American. So, from that point of view I didn't have any big crises or anything like that.

Q: Did you find that the mission in Portugal had to spend time handling American dignitaries? Did the Congress...

BLOOMFIELD: No, not that much. It's not like the other parts of Europe where they come frequently. Maybe more so now. I have the impression that more American Congressmen go to Portugal now, but I guess for some reason in those days, it was still considered something of an out-of-the-way place. We had our share. We had a meeting, an Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting and a big US delegation. We had our CODELs, and so on, but it wasn't like London or Paris where there's usually ten Congressmen in town all the time. Nothing like that.

Q: Did you find marked differences in your two tours with respect to the Country Team, and could you comment about running the Country Team and your experience?

BLOOMFIELD: I didn't find that much difference for the reason that, although you might expect that Portugal being an European country would be different and not thought of as a

third world country there were many similarities to developing countries in Latin America. To give you an example: we were very anxious to give Portugal economic assistance in the aftermath of the revolution because we were trying to strengthen the democratic forces there, and yet there was no aid program for Western Europe, so they created one for Portugal, and it was administered out of the Near Eastern Bureau of AID.

So, I again had the kind of diverse representation from the US Government that you would expect in a place like Ecuador. Not quite as much as in Ecuador, but we had a military assistance group there separate from the attach#s. We also had the attach# office, and we had the Ag people. We had pretty much the usual deck of cards.

Q: Reflecting on your thirty years in the Foreign Service, and then your years in Boston since then, there certainly have been many changes in conditions in the Foreign Service. How do you feel about the Foreign Service as a career for somebody now who is just about to embark on a career?

BLOOMFIELD: Yes. That's a question that I really have asked myself. I mean, I've been asked it by young people and I also think about what I should say. It's a question that frankly troubles me. Ten years ago, certainly fifteen years ago, I wouldn't have had any hesitation in replying that I thought it was a great career, and that if they were at all interested in foreign affairs, they should seriously consider and take the exam, and so on. I'm not sure today. I guess when I weigh everything, I would still tell them that it can be a rewarding career. But the negative side of my thoughts really stems less from personal experience than what I've been reading about what's happened in the Service just in the last six or seven years. So, you know, you read all of this about the tremendous budget cuts, and the shrinking of the numbers of personnel in the Service because of budget cuts, and the apparent politicization, to use that horrible word, of the Service, and the sort of shrinking of opportunities. And you really wonder, am I right to tell anybody to go into this? I guess, maybe it's a hope more than anything else that this is a pendulum which has swung too far and it will, like most things in our society, will swing back towards the center.

I haven't been asked the question in a couple of years. If I were asked it today, I would tell young people that it can be a rewarding career, that I have no regrets about my career, but they ought to realize that the Service is operating under much more difficult conditions than it was when I was in it. And that they ought to look into those problems before they go in it, and then, even after having looked into them, go in with their eyes open.

I want to make a more general point, because after all the people who might have any interest in what I'm giving you today, are probably not going to be young people thinking about going into the Foreign Service, but are people who are historians, I suppose, or political scientists. What I'm going to say is nothing new, it's been said lots of times before, but it really is a tragedy that our country is so neglectful of its professional diplomatic service. I think we must be the only, certainly major power in the world, that still has up to a third of its ambassadors from political appointments. Also, we have allowed agencies which are basically domestic agencies, to create their own foreign services. That also weakens the professionalism of our diplomacy. I think that that is a very serious problem for the national interests, and we're paying a price for it. So, that's my last word.

Q: Well, thank you very much Ambassador Bloomfield for these very insightful and perceptive comments on your career. These comments will be made a part of the historical archives of The Association for Diplomatic Studies. Thank you.

End of interview